



Calm Abiding and Clear Seeing

An Introduction to Practice

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Four Thoughts that Turn the Mind

**These freedoms and advantages are hard to find and easily lost;
Everything changes, nothing stays the same, and death comes quickly;
Every thought, word, and deed is a seed that inevitably grows into experience;
The cycles of confusion and conflicting emotions do not lead to happiness or peace;
-- on these I shall reflect.**

"Through carefully contemplating the difficulties of acquiring the pleasures and opportunities [of a precious human existence], the way to make it meaningful once acquired, the way it can quickly change due to its impermanence, the way our karma takes control once we die, the way karma will mature without losing its potency, how we will experience actions and their results in the three ways, the attendant sufferings of the six classes of beings, and the problems of the seeming happiness within existence, we will arouse a strong motivation to strive for liberation. Since that is the root of Dharma, it is most important at all times... If we leave those contemplations as a one-time theoretical understanding, at first our meditation may develop, but afterwards, not only will we be unable to suppress our attachment, aversion, and confusion, we will be under the sway of the sense pleasures, such as food and clothing, and the seduction of fame and desires. The reason it is so rare that practice is brought to fruition comes down to just this."
~ Dakpo Tashi Namgyal, *Moonbeams of Mahamudra*, p.154

This Precious Human Life: *these freedoms and advantages are hard to find and easily lost*

Food, water, shelter, safety, freedom and leisure, intelligence and interest, teachers, teachings, and community -- we have the good fortune to have them all, right here, right now. But the causes and conditions for all these freedoms and advantages may end at any time. This precious life has great potential for good or harm. We should take advantage of these resources and opportunities and use them for the genuine benefit of ourselves and others.

The Truth of Impermanence: *everything changes, nothing stays the same, and death comes quickly*

Every event and circumstance is dependent on complex causes and conditions that are constantly arising and disappearing. The world and its inhabitants are subject to change. Though we see change, impermanence, and death all around us, we act as though we were going to live forever. But we too will die. Every day, this precious human life with all its freedoms and advantages becomes one day shorter. The time of death is uncertain, but nothing can prevent death: not wealth, intelligence, strength, power, or friends. We should not waste this life.

The Inevitability of Karma: *every action is a seed that inevitably grows into experience*

Every experience and all phenomena come about through innumerable causes and conditions. Nothing arises without causes, and nothing occurs without itself becoming a seed of future phenomena, large or small, immediate or distant. Greed, hatred, and delusion inevitably lead to suffering for ourselves and others. Generosity, kindness, and wisdom lead to genuine happiness. Although we cannot know exactly how and when, our actions do inevitably ripen into our experiences of happiness and suffering. Every thought, word, and deed we do becomes easier to repeat. Repeated actions become habits; habits become character. We alone are responsible for our actions and our experience of life.

The Faults of Samsara: *confusion and conflicting emotions do not lead to happiness or peace*

The aches and pains of the physical body, the grief of losing what we hold dear, old age, sickness and death: some things are unavoidable. But we create additional suffering for ourselves and others with greed, hatred, delusion, jealousy, and pride. When we measure life by wealth, pleasure, praise, and reputation, we allow our happiness to depend upon circumstances beyond our control. Understanding the causes and futility of samsara, filled with weariness and revulsion, we turn to a genuine refuge: the aspiration and determination to awaken, not just for our own freedom, but for the sake of all beings.

***Do not run full tilt at tranquility and insight.
First cultivate a fertile ground for positive qualities within yourself.***
~ Jamgon Kongtrul, *The Torch of Certainty*

Refuge and Bodhicitta

Until enlightenment, I go for refuge in	sang gye cho dang tsok kyi nam la
The Buddha, the Dharma, and the supreme Sangha.	jang chub bar du dak ni kyap su chi
By the merit of generosity and other virtues,	dak gi jin sok gyi pe so nam kyi
May I attain buddhahood for the benefit of beings.	dro la pen chir sang gye drup par shok

The Four Immeasurables

May all sentient beings have happiness and the causes of happiness.	sem chen tam che de wa dang de we gyu dang den par gyur chik
May we be free of suffering and the causes of suffering.	duk ngal dang duk ngal gyi gyu dang dral war gyur chik
May we never be separated from true happiness which is free from suffering.	duk ngal me pe de wa dam pa dang mi dral war gyur chik
May we abide in great equanimity, free from the partiality of attachment and aversion.	nye ring chak dang nyi dang dral war tang nyom chen po la ne par gyur chik

From this time until attaining enlightenment,
I vow to practice Great Compassion
For the sake of all beings.
~ Mani Kabum

Through bodhicitta all the practices of giving,
morality, patience, vigor, concentration, and wisdom
become causes for attaining enlightenment,
and they get the name "perfection" as well.
~ Khunu Rinpoche, *Vast As the Heavens, Deep As the Sea*

Calm Abiding

Sanskrit: *shamatha*

Tibetan: *shinay*

Shamatha is evenly and calmly abiding in whatever arises in experience. It is nonreactive inclusive attention imbued with the qualities of stability, flexibility, clarity, and openness. Calm abiding is the necessary foundation for clear seeing and other practices.

Begin by settling the body

Cultivate a way of sitting that is aligned and upright, settled and relaxed.

Don't fidget, don't tense up, don't fall asleep. Rest awake.

Permeate the whole body with natural breathing and gentle bright awareness.

Legs: Sitting on the floor: full lotus, half lotus, or tailor position. Don't cut off blood circulation. Sitting on a chair or stool: preferably not leaning against the back. Feet rooted on floor, thighs sloping slightly downward toward the knees.

Hands: Palms facing up, the back of one hand resting upon the palm of the other, resting just below the navel, with thumbs touching lightly. Or rest hands palms-down on the thighs, not straining the arms.

Torso: Feel the whole spine, from the top of the head to the tailbone. Let the spine be upright and relaxed, resting in its natural "S" shape. Don't slump forward, don't arch back, don't lean to either side.

Shoulders: Relaxed, not slumped forward, not arched too far back. Align the arms so they don't strain the shoulders.

Neck and Head: Relaxed in a natural position atop the spine. Feel ears aligned over shoulders and shoulders aligned over hips. Don't jut the chin forward or pull it back; let the ears gently float upward into the sky.

Tongue: Lightly touching the roof of the mouth. Relax tongue, jaw, throat, and face.

Eyes: Relaxed, gazing softly into space. Mind busy? Let the eyes gaze slightly downward. Mind dull? Let the eyes gaze slightly upward.

***The physical body is the first foundation of mindfulness.
Don't try to meditate without the body!***

There are various methods for cultivating calm abiding

Choose a method and stick with it for the entire session.

- **Rest attention on the physical sensations of breathing.**
- **Rest attention on a visual object** such as a stick or a stone or an image of the Buddha.
- **Take sounds as the "object" of attention.** Simply hear sounds come and go. Abandon commenting or making judgments about their source or qualities.
- **Focus attention on no object.** Gaze softly into the space in front of you. Include in your awareness all experience as it arises and subsides. Whenever your attention collapses down to a particular sensation, feeling, or thought, relax the gaze back into space and gently open awareness to include everything.

Typical "hindrances" to calm abiding include busyness, dullness, attraction, aversion, and doubt. Notice these when they arise but keep your attention undistracted and clear. Eventually every "obstacle" will be seen as part of the practice.

"The mind remains relaxed, open, space-like and clear, neither getting lost in remembering the past nor in thinking of the future, nor mistaking the reality of the thoughts of the present. It remains in a state of vigilance, open to itself as it is without tension. The meditator should not have the sensation of being in a deep, dark gorge clouded with fog, but rather on the summit of a mountain... clearly see[ing] the entire horizon.

The correct manner of placing the mind is essential. There is often a tendency to approach meditation in a very tense manner, in a state of forced non-distraction. Without knowing how to first relax one's mind, leaving it open and content, it is not possible to meditate. This is a necessary condition.

The Indian yogi Tilopa said, "The mind tied up with tensions will unravel without any doubt if it relaxes." From time without beginning, we are bound by thoughts which result in great tension. In meditation, this is undone and one rests at ease...

The mind resting in its own nature should be devoid of any tension. When we meditate in this way, it is possible that we will experience a short period without any thoughts. However, soon thoughts will arise. As beginners, we perhaps believe that we should not have any thoughts. This is a mistake; it is enough to remain vigilant and non-distracted."

~ Bokar Rinpoche¹

¹ Bokar Rinpoche, *Meditation: Advice to Beginners*, p.66-67 and 80.

Pith instructions for calm abiding with an object

Begin by settling into the body.

Place attention on the chosen object (breath, visual object, sounds). Rest attention evenly, without commentary or judgment. Maintain vigilance to avoid distractions; if your mind wanders, immediately bring it back to your chosen object.

Sensations, feelings, and thoughts arise and subside -- don't block them or follow them, but if attention wanders, gently return to it to the chosen object. If attention does not wander, simply rest, aware of whatever comes and goes, while continuing to be anchored on the chosen object.

Again and again: return to the chosen object and rest in undistracted ease.

Settled, bright, open, alert, relaxed.

Pith instructions for calm abiding without an object

Settle into the breathing body, but instead of focusing on a particular object, let awareness open to include all experience, without preference or comment:

Sensations: touching, seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting

Feelings: pleasant, unpleasant, and neutral

Thoughts: stories, memories, impulses

Aware of them all, appearing and disappearing in limitless space.

Whenever your attention is captured by a sensation, feeling, or thought, settle back into undistracted natural ease... release grasping... let everything come and go in infinite space... Remain friendly, open, undistracted, accommodating, alert, and flexible...

Don't recall the past

Don't imagine the future

Don't think about the present

Don't try to figure anything out

Don't try to make anything happen

Relax, right now, and rest

~ Tilopa

Four Foundations of Mindfulness

*With mindfulness our fears will come to nothing,
And every virtue will drop into our hands.*
~ Shantideva 5.3

The four foundations of mindfulness -- sensations, feelings, thoughts, and phenomena -- are nothing less than all of human experience, and serve as a bridge between the stability of calm abiding and the knowing of clear seeing.

Start with resting steady attention upon physical sensations

Then expand your attention to include pleasant and unpleasant feelings

Then open to include thoughts and emotions and impulses

Hold all experience in undistracted, precise attention

First Foundation: *Kaya*: Body and Five Senses

The first foundation is the physical body and its senses. Rest attention in the sensations of the breathing body. When you can rest there, open to the sensations of hearing, seeing, smelling, tasting. Whenever you become dull or distracted, return to the sensations of breathing.

Second Foundation: *Vedana*: Feeling-tones

Immediately upon sense contact, notice a feeling-tone arise: pleasant, unpleasant, or neither pleasant nor unpleasant. Include these in attention, noticing the tendency to grasp at pleasant feelings, reject unpleasant feelings, and ignore neutral feelings.

Third Foundation: *Citta*: Mind and Mental Events

Mind and mental events include thoughts, concepts, stories, complex emotions, moods, mental images, memories, impulses, mental and emotional forces, drives, and habitual reactions.

When you can rest attention in physical sensations and feelings pleasant and unpleasant, then open to thoughts and emotions. Don't try to reject, control, or generate certain thoughts or emotions or mind states — just include them as they arise and fall in your awareness. Whenever you become distracted or dull, return to the first foundation of physical sensations, then include pleasant and unpleasant feelings, then include thoughts and emotions.

Fourth Foundation: *Dharmas*: All Phenomena

The fourth foundation of mindfulness is to know how the first three foundations (sensations, feelings, thoughts) interact with the fourth foundation, the world of phenomena — each of the four influencing and conditioning the others.

Clear Seeing

Sanskrit: *vipashyana*

Tibetan: *lhatong*

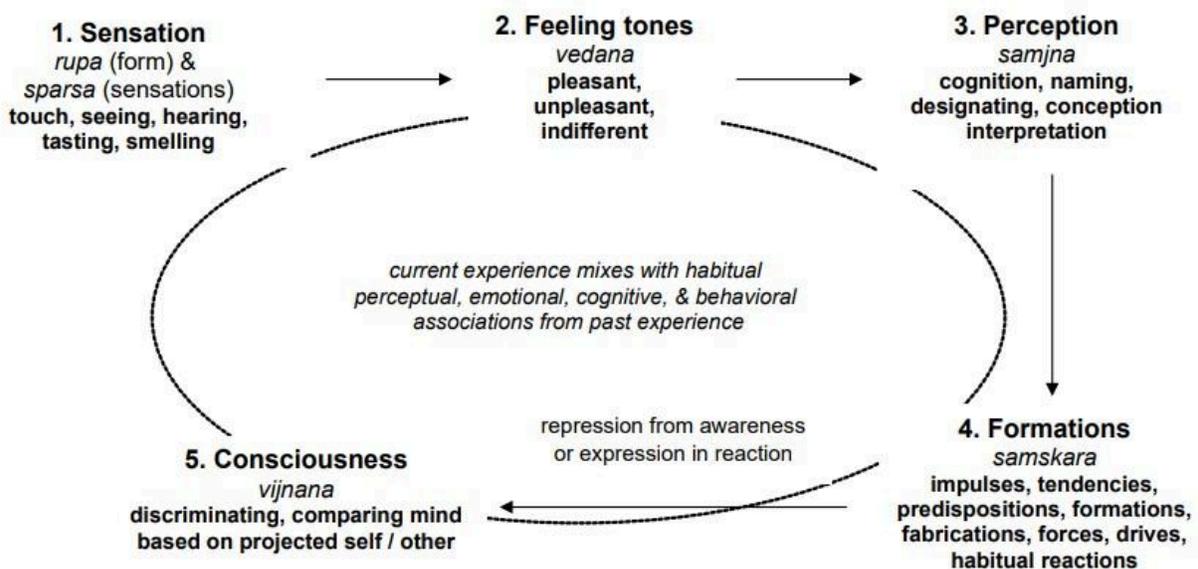
"By sticking to notions of 'I' and 'mine' and blindly following the feelings of attraction and repulsion to which these notions give rise, we accumulate negative karma. Let us stop doing that!" ~ Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche, Hundred Verses

The purpose of insight practice is to break the hold of habitual conflicting emotions and actions. Pleasant, unpleasant, and neutral feelings lead to attraction, aversion, and indifference; they lead to grasping, rejecting, and ignoring behaviors, which becomes a way of being and relating that leads to suffering.

The actual method of insight practice is to examine the nature of experience from the stable foundation of calm abiding. *See what is as it is*, and don't do anything with it. Just look. Trust and take refuge in awareness and compassion.

Now, investigate your experience: Is it not simply heaps (*skandhas*) of physical sensations, feelings, concepts, reactions, and consciousness, arising and subsiding? *Look to see.*

- *Are any of them permanent or solid?*
- *Are any of them "me" or "mine?"*



Examine the settled mind

"First, we assume the correct bodily posture without tension, then we place our mind in the state of shamatha, open and relaxed. We taste thus an experience of calm mixed with a feeling of well-being. Now, let us investigate where this calm mind resides: Is it in our head, in a determined place within our body, or in the body as a whole? In our heart? In our brain? Where does it dwell? What is the essence of this calm mind? Let us examine this carefully."

~ Bokar Rinpoche²

"When your shamatha is going well, look closely at the nature of your mind. Does it have a color, form, or shape? Does it reside internally or externally? Or is it something to be known apart from just that stillness? It may be an emptiness that cannot be identified as anything, a nothingness. Alternatively, it may be that, within stillness, the mental state that cannot be identified is vivid, crisp, stark, something you do not know how to describe. The nature of stillness may be a stupified dark mental state. Or it may be clear, sharp, and naked."

~ Wangchuk Dorje³

Examine the moving mind

When a thought arises, look directly at it:

Is there a place where it comes from?

Is there a place where it lingers?

When it leaves, does it leave a trace?

Does it have a shape, color, or other qualities?

The thought of a friend: does it have the shape, color, or other qualities of the friend?

If you decide that this thought has no qualities that you can find, then what about the thought that thinks this?⁴

² Bokar Rinpoche, *Meditation: Advice to Beginners*, p.101.

³ Wangchuk Dorje, *Mahamudra: Dispelling the Darkness of Ignorance*, in: *Moonbeams*, p.508.

⁴ Based on Michael Conklin, *Shamatha, Vipashyana, Mahamudra Retreat*, 2011 edition.

Examine appearances

"Direct your focus and eyes one pointedly to a specific object. Look directly at it. Then rest a while with relaxed attention. Again, look.

Similarly, look at the nature of sounds, which are objects for your ears. Look at pleasing sounds, displeasing sounds, loud ones, soft ones, various ones, existent ones, nonexistent ones, those uttered by yourself and by others, and so on. Also, look at the fragrant and foul odors that appear as objects for your nose, the delicious and unsavory tastes experienced by your tongue, and the sensations of pleasure and discomfort, hot and cold, sickness and pain that are tangible objects experienced by your body. Whatever occurs, look at that.

When you do so, do those appearances stop?
Or do you and the appearances appear to be separate?
Do appearances come to the mind?
Or does mind reach out to appearances, thinking, "This appears"?

Alternate between looking at the thought... and looking at any one of the five objects. Can you see any difference between these two?
Look: what is the difference between the appearing object and the perceiving thought?"

~ Wangchuk Dorje, *Dispelling the Darkness of Ignorance*

What is an appearance? -- not your thoughts about it, but the actual tactile or visual or auditory experience -- what is it?

Where is it? Is it "out there" in the object? Somewhere "in here" in your mind?

What experiences the visual image, the sound, the sensation?

Ask a question, but don't try to answer it.

 Pose the question to direct your attention, and then rest in the looking.

Alternate between calm abiding and clear seeing.

 When you get lost in stories about "objects" and "images" and "mind" just let go.

 Return to rest in the breathing body for a while.

 Then look again. Then rest again for a while. Then look again.

When your investigation has run its course, drop all effort.

 For a few moments, simply open to experience, just as it is.

 Then dedicate your practice to the benefit of all beings.

Dedication

At the end of every session, reaffirm your *bodhicitta* aspiration to awaken heart and mind for the sake of all beings. Do this by dedicating the benefits of your practice to all beings, completely and without reservation.

By this merit may I attain omniscience.	sö nam di yi tam che zik pa nyi
May the enemy, wrong action, be overcome.	top ne nye pe dra nam pam je ne
From the stormy waves of birth, old age, sickness, and death	kye ga na chi ba lap truk pa yi
May I quickly free all beings from the ocean of samsara.	si pe tso le dro kun nyur dröl shok

By this virtue, may I quickly	ge wa di yi nyur du dak
Realize mahamudra	chak gya chen po drup gyur ne
And bring every sentient being,	dro wa chik kyang ma lu pa
Without exception, to that state.	de yi sa la gö par shok

Bodhicitta is precious.	jang chub sem ni rin po che
Once arisen, may it not diminish.	kye pa nyam pa me pa dang
May it arise in whom it has not arisen.	ma kye pa nam kye gyur chik
But ever grow and flourish.	gong ne gong du pel war shok

*May all beings everywhere
Plagued by sufferings of body and mind
Obtain an ocean of happiness and joy
By virtue of my merits.*

*For as long as space endures
And as long as living beings remain,
Until then may I too abide
To dispel the misery of the world.*

~ Shantideva 10.2, 10.55

Carrying Practices

*Wherever there is an object of particular attachment,
Envision it clearly in front of your mind
And separate it into the five skandhas.*

~ Mipham, The Wheel of Analytical Meditation

In daily life, when you notice the first sign of grasping, rejecting, or ignoring,
look right into that sensation, feeling, or thought.
Just look, without comment or judgment.
What is it? Where is it?
Is the feeling solid? Is it permanent?
Is the feeling you, or yours?

Regard all experience as a dream...
As a mirage...
As a reflection in a mirror...
Arising, yet empty of solidity, like a rainbow or a cloud...

When the mind is stressed, let it seek refuge in a steady clear awareness that rests in the
breathing body. Don't send your mind out alone into the world. Sit, stand, walk, eat,
sleep, work, and live in awareness centered in the breathing body.

*"Between sessions, simply maintain the light touch of mindfulness...
When a thought appears... look at its nature without blocking it or grasping at it.
When you have happy ones or sad ones, look at their nature."*

~ Wangchuk Dorje, Dispelling the Darkness of Ignorance

Practice with a mirror and an echo

"Standing before a mirror, observe the reflection of your own body -- looking at the image for some time -- and consider how this image is produced by a combination of various factors -- the mirror, the body, light, space, etc.-- under certain conditions. It is an object of dependent arising without any self-substance -- appearing, yet void. Then observe the appearance of the image, together with its clothes and ornaments, and consider whether you are pleased or displeased with it; again feign to burst into anger, fight against yourself, and observe whether you are affected by it. Practicing thus, you will discover that all pleasures and displeasures are illusory and subjective, created by one's own mind, and so your clinging will be greatly reduced.

"To practice the meditation on echoes, you should go to a place where they can be produced. Then shout loudly many pleasing and displeasing words to praise or malign yourself, and observe the reactions of pleasure and displeasure. Practicing thus, you will soon realize that all words, pleasant or unpleasant, are as illusory as the echoes themselves. If you can practice this meditation successfully, you will soon become indifferent toward both praise and blame, and you will obtain liberation...

"Until you can equate pleasure and displeasure, joy and pain, gain and loss... you should continue to meditate on illusoriness in a quiet place or in solitude. After this you can go to a village or town to practice among people and activities. If you find that you still react favorably or unfavorably to agreeable and disagreeable things you should return to solitude and practice once more..."

~ Dakpo Tashi Namgyal⁵

Form is like a mass of foam,
Sensations are like bubbles on water,
Perception is like a mirage,
Formations are like a plantain tree,
And consciousness is like an illusion.

Cast away decisively
Let go with ease
Dismantle thoroughly
Gently let be

~ Serlingpa

~ Mipham Rinpoche⁶

⁵ The Epitome of an Introduction to the Profound Path of the Six Yogas of Naropa. Translated by Garma C.C. Chang, *Teachings of Tibetan Yoga*, p.82-83.

⁶ Mipham Rinpoche, Putting the Instruction on the Purification of Mental Activity into Practice. Translated by Adam Pearcey. Lotsawa House.

Verses from *Aspirations for Mahamudra* by Rangjung Dorje

All experience is the manifestation of mind.
As for mind, there is no mind; mind's nature is empty.
Empty and unceasing, mind arises as experience.
By looking into mind deeply, may I be clear about how it is.

Perceptions, which never existed in themselves, are mistaken for objects;
Awareness itself, because of ignorance, is mistaken for a self;
Through the power of dualistic fixation I wander in the realm of existence.
May ignorance and confusion be completely resolved.

Look at objects and there is no object: one sees mind;
Look at mind and there is no mind: it is empty of nature;
Look at both of these and dualistic clinging subsides on its own.
May I know sheer clarity, the way mind is.

Free from mental constructions, it is called mahamudra.
Free from extremes, it is called madhyamika.
Because everything is complete here, it is also called maha ati.
May I gain the confidence that, in understanding one, I know them all.

The Housebuilder

"Through many births
I have wandered on and on,
Searching for, but never finding,
The builder of this house.
To be born again and again is suffering.

House-builder, you are seen!
You will not build a house again!
All the rafters are broken,
The ridgepole destroyed;
The mind, gone to the Unconstructed,
Has reached the end of craving!"

~ *Dhammapada* verses 153-154, translated by Gils Fronsdal.

The *house* is the sense of a separate self. The *builder* is craving. The *rafters* are reactive emotions. The *ridgepole* is ignorance -- not knowing how things are.

Enhancements

The purpose of the Dharma is to free ourselves from conflicting emotions and their root cause -- the confusion of misperceiving the nature of experience.

Again and again, reflect deeply on the four thoughts that turn the mind.

* There is no freedom without clear seeing; no clear seeing without calm abiding, and no calm abiding without setting the proper motivation.

Consider these six supports for your meditation practice: having a conducive space, having your basic needs met, contentment, a manageable life, ethical behavior, and letting go of drama.

Calm abiding temporarily interrupts conflicting emotions. *Clear seeing* cuts the confusion that is the root of conflicting emotions.

Learn to feel your way into undistracted calm abiding. Calm abiding is not a narrow focused concentration that excludes experience. Calm abiding is open accommodating attention that does not wander or react.

See how stability and clarity are two aspects of one awareness. Calm abiding always includes mindfulness, knowing what is happening from moment to moment.

To see clearly, we need to carefully look deeply into the nature of what we

experience: sensations, feelings, thoughts. *See what is as it is.* Examine experience directly and carefully. Know directly, without conceptualization, the actual nature of experience: empty arisings.

"If thoughts arise, cut completely through them as they arise and settle without grasping. At the beginning, settle firming the mind. In the middle, settle relaxing the mind. At the end, settle without hope or fear."

~ Dezhung Rinpoche

Short sessions, many of them.

In meditation and in daily life, look right at the nature of any and all experience. When meditating, don't grasp after insights or states of mind. In daily life, don't grasp at a sense of self.

Cultivate faith and trust the Three Jewels and buddha nature: your own inherent awareness and compassion.

*It is difficult to be born a human;
Difficult is the life of mortals;
It is difficult to hear the true Dharma;
Difficult is the arising of buddhas.*

*Do no harm,
Cultivate what's skillful,
Purify the [heart]mind:
This is the teaching of the Buddha.*
~ Dhammapada, 182-183

Four Noble Truths

Dukkha: *dissatisfaction arises:* sorrow, stress, struggle, discontent.

Samudaya: *the causes of dukkha* are greed, hatred, and delusion.

Nirodha: *the end of dukkha* comes by letting go of the causes.

Marga: *the path to the end of dukkha* is the noble eightfold path.

Noble Eightfold Path

Right View: view, understanding, knowing how things are:

- four noble truths: dissatisfaction, its cause, its end, the path;
- dependent arising: no state is permanent, separate, or ultimately satisfying;
- truth of karma: actions evolve into experienced results

Right Intention: *samkalpa:* aspiration, resolve, motivation, intention:
renounce the causes of suffering: clinging, ill-will, harming, delusion

Right Speech: refrain from lying, divisive speech, abusive speech, idle chatter

Right Action: refrain from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, or other harmful actions

Right Livelihood: abandon dishonest livelihood and take up right livelihood: refraining from trading in weapons, living beings, meat, intoxicants, and poison

Right Effort: abandon the unwholesome, cultivate the wholesome

Right Mindfulness: *sati:* remembering; not clinging to sense-objects; clearly comprehending the four aspects of experience:

- body (physical sensations)
- feeling-tones (pleasant, unpleasant, neutral)
- mind and mental events (thoughts, emotions, images, memories, impulses)
- dharmas (phenomena, the way things work)

Right Attention: *samadhi:* stable, non-reactive attention: cultivate stable clear attention and investigating experience, leading to joy, happiness, unshakeable equanimity, peace, power, knowing-and-freedom

Clarifying Terms

Sanskrit (Tibetan)

Sati (*drenpa*): Mindfulness: remembering one's chosen object of attention. *Sati* includes *samprajanya* (Tib. *sheshin*): introspection that is alert and clearly comprehending, as well as *yoniso manasikara* (Tib. *yi-je*): wise attention; knowing what effort is appropriate.

Shamatha (*shinay*): Calm abiding; resting evenly in whatever arises. *Shamatha* is nonreactive, flexible, stable, clear, and open.

Samadhi (*ting nge 'dzin*): Stability; attention that unifies subject (awareness) and object (experience). *Samadhi* is the fully completed stability of calm abiding. *Samadhi* is often translated as "concentration" but that should be reserved for *ekaggata*, the one-pointed focus that leads to the levels of concentrative absorption (*jhana* or *dhyana*).

Vitarka (*tok-pa*) and **vicara** (*cho-pa*): Directing attention to an object and then investigating in a sustained way. The placing is *shamatha*; the investigating is *vipashyana*. The traditional metaphor is to pick up an object and then examine from various angles to discern its qualities.

Vipashyana (*lhatong*): Insight; clear or superior seeing. *Vipashyana* may begin with analytical examination, but eventually becomes the nonconceptual recognition of the genuine nature of experience and phenomena. *Vipashyana* leads to wisdom (*prajna*). "*Calm abiding interrupts conflicting emotions. Clear seeing destroys them at their root.*" (Moonbeams, p.39)

Prajna (*sherab*): Discriminating wisdom that knows the causes and actual nature of phenomena. *Prajna* includes worldly as well as higher knowledge, and knows the characteristics of phenomena as well as their empty nature. Discriminating wisdom (*prajna*) is not the same as timeless awareness or pure knowing (*jnana*).

"Look into the essence of mind, be it moving or still. Whether it is in motion or not, its nature remains the same. So settle in an unaltered experience of its essence. It's crucial that you're constantly mindful and aware. When a stable stillness of mind develops, then, without deliberate clinging or fixation, blend it with sensory perceptions and states of mind, and thereby integrate your thoughts into the path."

~ Jamgon Kongtrul, Mahamudra: The Swift Way to Become a Lord of Realization

Knots

Abhinivesa: insistence; automatic perceptual and conceptual belief in the apparent existence of self and objects; the way things appear due to conditioned patterning of perception and thought.

Prapanca: conceptual fabrication, the stream directed by imprinted preconceptions, including the internal flow of thought constructs and the self and the environment they create. Conceptual elaboration... clinging to words or concepts... the web of words and concepts in which one gets entangled when clinging... the root of all contentions.

Samsara: the world of habitual patterns; from *sam*, together, intensive; and *sara*, to go, run, flow, hasten. So *samsara* means going about -- endless migration, unceasing commotion and unrest. *Samsara* is the created experience of dissatisfaction and struggle.

Samskara: conditioned mental formations, all constructs, good, bad, or indifferent: dispositions, tendencies, volitions, impulses, emotions, strivings, and reactions. The process by which reactive emotional patterns are formed by, and then continue to form, our experience of the world. The volitional factor in *samskaras* is motivated by desire, which gives rise to *karma*.

Samyojana: internal formations; knots; agglomerations; binding together; fetters. In the Theravada tradition the fetters are the five lower (belief in a self, doubt and uncertainty, attachment to rites and rituals, sensual desire, and ill will) and the five higher (lust for material existence, lust for immaterial existence, conceit, restlessness, and ignorance). In the Mahayana tradition there are five dull knots (confusion, desire, anger, pride, doubt) and five sharp knots (viewing the body as self, extreme views, wrong views, perverted views, and superstitious views).

Upadana: grasping; compulsive patterning of perceptions, thoughts, and emotional reactions according to the conditioning of past experience.

Vasana: tendencies and inclinations; literally, fragrance, from *vas*: dwelling, residue, remainder. Subliminal inclinations and patterns, traces of past experience and action, residues of thoughts and actions, particularly the residue of ignorance. The driving forces that color and motivate attitudes and future actions; habit energies giving rise to *samsara*.

Vikalpa: patterning; the structuring of cognition due to past experience and the traces they have left. *Vikalpa* gives rise to the apparent world of self and environment and all our emotional reactions to such appearances.

Further Resources

Much of this introduction to the practice of calm abiding and clear seeing was inspired by oral teachings received from Lama Michael Conklin and Ken McLeod, and from the following traditional and modern texts.

Aligned, Relaxed, Resilient: The Physical Foundations of Mindfulness by Will Johnson. Makes a gentle and compelling case for why we shouldn't (and can't) meditate without the body.

Anapanasati Sutta is Shakyamuni Buddha's original manual on mindfulness of breathing. Study the sutta, and then read Thich Nhat Hanh's *Breathe, You Are Alive*.

Clarifying the Natural State by Dakpo Tashi Namgyal. A classic 16th century manual for calm abiding, clear seeing, and mahamudra: how to practice, avoid errors, and carry the practice.

Heart Lamp: Lamp of Mahamudra & The Heart of the Matter by Tsele Natsok Rangdrol. Two 17th century manuals for shamatha-vipashyana-mahamudra.

Meditation: Advice to Beginners by Bokar Rinpoche. A modern manual for approaching shamatha-vipashyana-mahamudra.

Moonbeams of Mahamudra by Dakpo Tashi Namgyal. Incomparable anthology of instructions and inspiration. The translation by Elizabeth Callahan also includes Wangchuk Dorje's ***Mahamudra: Dispelling the Darkness of Ignorance***.

Satipatthana Sutta. Shakyamuni Buddha's manual on the four foundations of mindfulness: bringing calm abiding and clear seeing to bear on every experience and circumstance. There are many commentaries on this sutta from different traditions.

Stages of Meditation (Bhavanakrama) by Kamalashila. Many classic and contemporary Buddhist meditation masters' teachings are based on this three-part manual from the 9th century. Martin T. Adam's translation and commentary is titled *Meditation and The Concept of Insight in Kamalasila's Bhavanakramas*.

Shamatha, Vipashyana, Mahamudra Retreat by Lama Michael Conklin. This excellent, practical booklet was the inspiration for the structure of this introduction. Available at the Dekeling.Community website.

Wake Up to Your Life by Ken McLeod. Chapter Three (Cultivating Attention) provides detailed instructions on mindfulness and calm abiding. Chapter Nine (Insight and Dismantling Illusion) is an advanced perspective on clear seeing.